445 da. 127
1-12

The consequence of the character of the INDIVIDUAL; *and the influence of* EDUCATION *in the forming of it.*

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, IN CARMARTHEN,

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1790,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF A

SUNDAY SCHOOL,

AND

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF

THE MANAGERS OF THE CHARITY.

BY

CHARLES SYMMONS, B. D.

OF

CLARE-HALL, CAMBRIDGE,

AND

RECTOR OF NARBERTH, IN THE COUNTY OF PEMBROKE.

——————*Vis eſt notiſſima.*——OVID.
Quod nunc RATIO *eſt,* IMPETUS *ante fuit.*——ID.

GLOCESTER,

PRINTED BY R. RAIKES,

AND SOLD BY E. AND T. WILLIAMS, NO. 13, STRAND, LONDON.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

CECIL, BARONESS DYNEVOR,

FROM RESPECT

FOR HER JUDGMENT AND BENEVOLENCE,

EVER ACTIVE

IN DIFFUSING VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS

AMONG HER SPECIES

THIS SERMON,

INTENDED

TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF AN INSTITUTION,

WHICH HAS

EXPERIENCED HER PARTICULAR PATRONAGE,

IS INSCRIBED

BY HER LADYSHIP'S

GREATLY OBLIGED

FRIEND AND SERVANT,

CHARLES SYMMONS.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A SERMON,

PREACHED

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

LUKE i. xlvi.

What manner of Child ſhall this be?

THE extraordinary circumſtances, which preceded and accompanied the nativity of the Baptiſt, occaſioned this queſtion of mingled curioſity and ſurpriſe. By the angelic viſion to Zacharias; the ſuſpenſion of his ſpeech which followed as the puniſhment of his unbelief; the predicted conception of Elizabeth, as formerly of Sarah, at a very advanced period of life; the acknowledgment of the bleſſed Virgin

by the infant yet unborn; and the inſtant recovery of ſpeech, which rewarded the obedience of the father in naming the child,—an unuſual degree of expectation was excited. The minds of men, awakened and alarmed, were inquiſitive about the future character and fortunes of this diſtinguiſhed birth: and, at a juncture ſo ſollicitous, *What manner of Child ſhall this be?* came naturally from the public mouth.

The birth, indeed, of the immediate forerunner and herald of the Meſſiah was an event of peculiar dignity and conſequence to his tribe, his nation, and his ſpecies. But the birth alſo of every member of the human race is of great and general importance: and when a rational and immortal being is placed by the hand of the Almighty on this ſtage of exiſtence, the intereſt of the event extends beyond the individual, the family, the neighbourhood, to every part of that great political aſſociation which conſtitutes the community or nation. Society, in its preſent complex and artificial

ſtate

ſtate may be regarded as a web of fine texture, to the perfection of which the integrity of all its threads is requiſite: or as a building, in which the mutual reliance and ſupport of parts are ſo accurately adjuſted, that the ſafety of the whole fabric may be endangered by the loſs or weakneſs of a ſingle ſtone. It is to be contemplated as an aggregate of individuals, collected into families, or diſtributed into profeſſions, and bound together in one large body by language, manners, and laws. On this view of ſociety we ſee man ſo interwoven with man, and mutual wants creating ſuch a mutual dependency, that it is evident neither the talents, nor the virtues, nor the vices of the individual can be conſidered as the ſole property of their immediate poſſeſſor. If the member of a family or of a profeſſion; if the huſbandman, the merchant, the ſoldier, the magiſtrate, the prieſt be qualified or unfit for the appropriate duties of his function, the good or the evil muſt be of wide extent; and, by the family, or the profeſſion,

will be propagated, though with decreaſing diſtinctneſs, to the remoter members of the ſocial frame: the touched ſtring will tremble to its extremity, and the broken ſurface of the elaſtic fluid will undulate beyond the obſervation of the ſenſe.

This is the *certain* intereſt of the ſociety in the individual. But the former *may* poſſeſs in the latter an intereſt, more obvious to the general eye,—more palpable, direct and ſtrong.

In a ſtate conſtituted like our's, the effects of character, of virtue, induſtry, and talents, are great beyond calculation. Their energy is perpetually mocking the accident of birth, and lifting men from the lower to the higher orders of the community. Lights of the Church, and guardians of the Laws, and oracles of the Senate,—men, whoſe high ſtation has enabled them to throw their utility immediately and ſenſibly over a large portion

portion of their ſpecies, have ſometimes iſſued from the cottage. When *a man*, therefore, *is born into the world*, the event may be important beyond the limitation of human foreſight. The intereſt of millions may diſtinctly be involved in it: and it belongs to the whole nation to inquire, and not without ſollicitude, *What manner of Child ſhall this be?*

But the importance of this inquiry will ſtrike us with far greater force, if we conſider in its reference to himſelf the character of *the man that is born?*

The worldly intereſts of the one are not, it is allowed, to be put into competition with thoſe of the many. But man brings with him into being an intereſt, peculiar to the individual, which far outweighs all the temporal intereſts of his kind thrown together into the balance. In national calamities the ſuffering of the aggregate is fictitious: and where a whole

people

people are extirpated by famine, peſtilence, or the ſword, the agony of death, and the pang of ſeparation from the connexions of life, experienced by a ſingle individual, form in truth the whole feeling of wretchedneſs,—repeated as it may be in an hundred thouſand diſtinct creatures of the ſpecies. But from the pains of ſeparation and departure, though an hundred-fold more intenſe than can be admitted by the preſent conſtitution of our nature, what intereſt can reſult to be compared with that which accompanies each of us into the world? When the vital union which conſtitutes man is complete, a being is formed, who is wonderful in capacity, and awful in deſtination. With temptation from without to aſſail, and corruption from within to betray: with the light of revelation to direct, and the influences of the Divine grace to ſupport, he is appointed to contend for the infinite objects of eternity. On his own conduct is ſuſpended that inconceivable happineſs or miſery, which, intenſe in its de-

gree

gree, is everlaſting in its duration. When we contemplate, therefore, in the human infant the inſtrument of ſuch extenſive good or evil to his ſpecies and himſelf; when, with a full ſenſe of the importance of the characters, we acknowledge in him the PROBATIONER OF TIME, and THE HEIR OF ETERNITY,—we muſt neceſſarily extend an anxious view to his future life, and aſk, with earneſtneſs ſtrong enough to ſhake us to our inmoſt fibre, *What manner of Child ſhall this be?*

BUT are there no means of aſcertaining with ſome preciſion the momentous object of this inquiry? Is the human mind unalterably ſhaped and biaſſed by the hand of its Creator?—or is it abandoned altogether to accident to catch its determining impulſe? No.—Too juſt to ſubject us to the neceſſity, which muſt reſult from original and immutable impreſſion; and too merciful to commit a concern of ſuch mighty magnitude to the indiſcretion of chance, the Creator has ordained

ordained that man ſhall, in a great degree, be the artificer of the character of man. With a variety of mental as of bodily features, we come by the divine appointment into the world in a ſtate of ſuſceptible ſoftneſs; and demand from our maturer fellow-creatures thoſe impreſſions, which are to give the form and ſymmetry of our future lives. The child, in ſhort, is to be modelled by the man; and in the firſt ſtage of his exiſtence the deſtined creature of habit is to be formed for utility and happineſs; to be averted from the enormous evil, and inclined to the mighty good which lie within the ſcope of his career. Inſtruction, diſcipline, example are to decide *what manner of Child it is to be*: and as this is bad, or as thoſe are withheld, the riſing character is uſually drawn by the tendencies of our lapſed nature to evil. That this is the caſe, the leaſt acquaintance with the hiſtory of man will not permit us to doubt.

The firſt periods of life neceſſarily belong to the government of ſenſe. Before reaſon and

and the moral principle are formed, or ſufficiently developed to be in any degree diſtinguiſhable, the paſſions are vigorous and active. Immediate gratification is the object of the child: and without thoſe motives to forbearance, which the authority or the leſſons of his elders might ſuggeſt, he grows up in the habit of aſſerting unqualified indulgence, as the privilege of his birth. Unreſtrained and undiſciplined, his temper becomes violent, and capricious: and the ſelfiſh paſſions, acquiring far more than their due proportion of influence, lord it in his little ſtate. The ſocial and benevolent affections, for theſe alſo are natives of his heart, unfoſtered and unprotected, ſubmit to the controll of their fellows: or, with a wrong direction, contribute to exaſperate rather than aſſwage the cauſes of the diſorder. The fidelity, the juſtice, the friendlineſs, the compaſſion of the uninſtructed boy are confined to ſuch of his fellow-creatures as reſemble him in fancy and purſuits. As he advances to maturity,—his

reaſon is already depraved, his moral principle loſt or perverted, his underſtanding weakened and contracted. Without a mind to comprehend the advantage, or an eye to enjoy the beauty of general order, he owns an intereſt at variance with the intereſt of his ſpecies. A ſtranger to the force and awfulneſs of religion, he is diſpoſed to aſk, with the Egyptian tyrant, "*Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey him?*" And, far from admitting the controll of an intereſt buried in a remote and inviſible futurity, he limits his ſordid views to the ſenſualities of a day. His palate now demands the high zeſt of vice. Habitual exceſs is become fatally neceſſary to his enjoyment; and at length his debauched eye turns with diſguſt from the freſh cheek of health to dwell with delight on the ghaſtlineſs of diſeaſe! In this ſtate of miſerable diſorder, the HUMAN SAVAGE iſſues forth to form a blot in the ſocial plan; to ravage and to corrupt;—to ſpread contagion and diſtreſs; to excite abhorrence and compaſſion; to be a monſter and a victim!

FROM

FROM theſe ſad and obvious conſequences of inattention to the opening mind, has reſulted that ſenſe of the importance of EDUCATION, which has prevailed in every age and country in which ſociety has attained to any maturity and ſhape. In Pagan antiquity it impreſſed itſelf ſo deeply on the philoſopher and the legiſlator, that the inſtitutions of one, and the ſpeculations and leſſons of the other, reſpected among their firſt objects the forming of the MAN in the CHILD. In ſome ſtates the conſequence of this meaſure was ſo clearly ſeen, and the intereſt of the community in all its members was ſo ſtrongly felt, that the private right in the child was allowed to be ſuperſeded by the public. The training of the future citizen was transferred from the parent to the magiſtrate; and the general concern no longer permitted to be neglected or miſmanaged by individual incapacity or caprice. This plan, indeed, from its tendency to harden the features of humanity;—from its offering violence to nature,

and diſturbing the great fountain of ſociety itſelf in the relation of father and ſon, muſt be conſidered as open to merited reprehenſion. Anſwering, however, in its effects to the idea of the legiſlator, it bore honourable teſtimony of the judgment that adopted it. Thoſe governments, into which it was introduced, were eminently virtuous and energetic. Strength and order pervaded every part of them. A venerable band of elders gave wiſdom and ſtability to the council; whilſt an uncorrupt and well-inſtituted youth diſplayed their obedience, their frugality, their ſuperiority to pleaſure, in the city; their diſcipline, their patience, their firmneſs,—their contempt of pain, and of death in the field. In theſe ſtates, in ſhort, many of the virtues of the human character attained a ſtature, which was unrivalled;——till the Chriſtian revelation unfolded a larger ſcheme of things; and raiſed our nature by the communication of a moral code as much ſuperior in its purity, its objects, and its ſanctions to the

Pagan,

Pagan,—as heaven is higher than the earth, or as the immortal is of greater dignity than the mortal.

But if the neceſſity of education was admitted by the heathen, with no propriety can it be rejected by thoſe to whom a ſyſtem of revelation has been imparted. Among theſe knowledge of a ſublimer and a more intereſting nature is to be taught. What could originally be derived only from an immediate diſcloſure of the Divinity can be propagated no otherwiſe than by inſtruction: and as the higher aim of all revelation is to govern our lives, and not to inform our underſtandings, its leſſons muſt be rooted by early cultivation in the heart, and wrought, as it were, into the yielding texture of our yet unfaſhioned habits. What in ſhort was above the attainment of reaſon muſt be ſo transfuſed into our conſtitutions as to become the feeling of inſtinct.

On theſe accounts we find the importance of early diſcipline and inſtruction every where inculcated in the ſacred writings. That *he would command his children*, and *that*, in conſequence, *they would keep the way of the Lord to do juſtice and judgment*, was part of the commendation given by God to the Father of the faithful. To Eli were imputed thoſe offences of his ſons, which, by his authority, he might have reſtrained; or, by the ſeaſonable induction of good habits, have prevented. In the law we hear the Divine Lawgiver poſitively commanding the people to *teach their children diligently the ſtatutes and ordinances of their God*: and in other parts of the ſacred volume we are directed by the inſpired writers to *train up our children in the way that they ſhould go*: and *to bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.*

Thus recommended by human reaſon and experience; and enforced by the Divine command,

command, EDUCATION muſt occur to us as an object, which, it is one of our moſt momentous duties not to diſregard. But what is EDUCATION?—And of the various ideas that have been ſuggeſted of it, which ſhall we adopt, and which reject? On analyzing the complex notion of education, we diſcover that timely inſtruction, for the purpoſes of goodneſs and wiſdom, conſtitutes its eſſential principle. The ſhape may vary; and the dreſs may be ornamental or plain; but the ſubſtance is invariably the ſame. To familiarize the mind to the love of truth, temperance, juſtice; to open to the eye the genuine ſource of moral obligation in the will of the Creator, and to blend religion with the very heart;—to plant, in ſhort, the virtuous purpoſe in the boſom, to protect and foſter its growth with the dews of Heaven, till it riſes to yield its fruits before the throne of God—is the one great end of every juſt ſyſtem of education.

THUS

THUS defined, and not affecting to riſe above the uſeful, education might be ſuppoſed to be within the reach of the general hand. But in mature ſociety, the multitude are condemned to labour for their bread: and to the few alone belongs the leiſure, if they poſſeſs the capacity and inclination, to form and inſtitute the child. The time of the labourer, the huſbandman, the mechanic, who conſtitute the body of the people, is fully occupied with the cares of ſupplying the more obtruſive and palpable neceſſities of their families. Are they, then, at once to feel the exaction, and the incapacity of a duty?—to lament the advantages of enlightened ſociety exiſting in no degree for them?—to behold poverty and ignorance mutually acquiring from their fatal embrace growth, vigour, and ſtability?—No. With the other wants of the poor, the want of education is committed to the charity of the rich by that Being, who ordains various condition to be the means of various trial; and

and, in the neceſſities of one, ſupplies the opportunity and exerciſe of benevolence to another. Inſtruction is certainly part of that *good, which we are not to withhold from them to whom it is due.* We are directed *to ſtrengthen our brethren:* and *to follow after things wherewith one may edify another.* We are not only *to deal our bread to the hungry: but to looſe the bands of wickedneſs:*—not only to be *feet to the lame,* but *eyes alſo to the blind.*

In our country, indeed, this duty has been owned, and admitted to its juſt influence. To alleviate the great, and, perhaps, the only real evil attached to ſubordinate ſituation, eſtabliſhments have, long ſince, been formed for the inſtruction of the infant poor. Charity-Schools have been raiſed: and acceſs, not to ambitious, but, to uſeful knowledge been offered to the loweſt claſſes of the community. Ignorance, with its attendant, vice, fled from the limits of the inſtitution: whilſt acquaint-

ance with duty, and love of order ſucceeded to the vacant place. Led over the threſhold of letters, the poor man was no longer wholly dependent on the public teacher for inſtruction. He might himſelf approach the ſacred well; and, drawing up *living water*, enlarge his draught at his diſcretion.

The advantages of theſe charitable foundations were great: but they were neceſſarily partial and confined. Numerous as were theſe ſeminaries, they were little more than green and cultivated ſpots in the ſurrounding and extended deſert of ignorance. To plant them in ſuch numbers, and to give them ſuch a compaſs as would ſuffice for general occupation, funds, larger than could be raiſed, were requiſite: and if benevolence could be wealthy to the extent of its wiſhes, the expanſion of its good in this inſtance would be impeded by an obſtacle, which all its endeavours would be inſufficient to overcome. In the inferior orders of ſociety, the child

child contributes largely to the ſubſiſtence and convenience of the family. In manufacturing towns his earnings are conſiderable; and in other places, in the field or the cottage, his offices, at an age, when he becomes an object of inſtruction, are of ſo much importance to the little community, of which he is a member, that he may juſtly be regarded as conſtituting, with their own induſtry, the ſole riches of his parents. It could hardly, therefore, be expected, that theſe would forego their own preſent and certain advantage for the future, and, as it might ſeem to them, the doubtful and equivocal benefit of their child. The juſtneſs of this ſuppoſition is atteſted by the fact. For while the metropolis, from its population and opulence, could ſhow with annual pride its thouſands of infant poor, *brought up in the fear of the Lord, and ſinging praiſes with underſtanding*; the ſmaller provincial town, the village and the country pariſh beheld the offspring of their poor condemned by the ſelfiſhneſs or

the

the prejudices of their parents to hereditary and hopeleſs ignorance.

To remove this laſt impediment to the diffuſion of civilization and uſeful knowledge was reſerved for the credit and felicity of the preſent times. A plan, the ſuggeſtion, probably, of accident, but improved with judgment, and executed with zeal, has been attended with ſuch encouraging ſucceſs as to juſtify the moſt ſanguine hopes of the lover of his ſpecies. While the ſix days were appropriated by the forcible and imperious demands of common life; the ſeventh, it was obſerved, was not allotted to thoſe purpoſes, for which it was privileged from labour. It was taken, indeed, from the buſineſs of ordinary œconomy, but it was not generally given to religion. It was a day, indeed, of relaxation from toil; but of the uninſtructed and undiſciplined the relaxation was diſorder: and the ſacred day, ſtained with profligacy and riot, beheld the youthful mind, freed from

from the reſtraints of occupation, luxuriating in idleneſs, collecting and ſcattering poiſons, and imbibing the principles of thoſe diſeaſes, which, matured in manhood, were to deſtroy the individual, and to injure the community. Such, in ſhort, was the abuſe of this holy day, that our Lord might have reproached us in nearly the ſame terms in which he upbraided the Jews; *It is written my day ſhall be called a day of righteouſneſs, but ye have made it a day of ſin!* To ſeize, therefore, on this day, and, redeeming it from the violation which it ſuffered, to conſecrate it, if the expreſſion may be allowed, to the ſervice of inſtruction and godlineſs, was a thought at once happy and juſt. It was, in ſome ſenſe, to make the bitter waters ſweet, and to draw life from that, which, in its perverted and unnatural ſtate, had too frequently proved to be the ſource of death! But the ſcheme was recommended by other conſiderations. Its maintenance exacted no large funds: its extent involved no ſacrifice of private con-

venience

venience; but the intereſt of the parent, and of the child, no longer on terms of oppoſition, concurred in its ſucceſs. Simple and commodious in its form, its utility was adapted to the city, the town, the village, the pariſh. Its accommodation alſo was unlimited; not the object of ſollicitation, but open, obvious,—obtruſive. With theſe pretenſions to regard, it firſt ſued for the public notice; and, with the juſtice of theſe pretenſions ratified by experience, it now ſeems with reaſon to inſiſt upon the public ſupport. By this wiſe and virtuous application of the Chriſtian Sabbath, ſo large a proportion of the riſing generation, throughout the kingdom, are now participating the advantages of uſeful education, that the period is apparently at hand, when, contemplating among all ranks the general diffuſion of civility, morals, religion, and, conſequently, of happineſs, the friends of Britain, and of men, ſhall acknowledge their infinite obligations to the unoſtentatious, but efficient eſtabliſhment of the SUNDAY SCHOOL.

To

To this inſtitution, however, faultleſs as it may appear to us in its mode, and beneficial as it has been evinced in its effects,—objections have been raiſed. The common arguments againſt the inſtruction of the poor have been oppoſed to it; and the uſe to which it applies the ſeparated ſeventh day has been condemned. Theſe objections, which are in fact barely ſpecious, have been repeatedly and ſatisfactorily anſwered. To diſplay, however, at more length, the goodneſs of our cauſe, we will give them that attention, which their conſequence has no right to demand.

Our ſcheme, then, of education, with all its humility and condeſcenſion, has been cenſured, as ill-adapted to the welfare, and too proud for the condition of thoſe, who are its objects. The firſt rudiments of letters have been envied to the poor: and to read and to write have been conſidered as dangerous accompliſhments,—big with cauſes of diſcontent

diſcontent to the individual, and with means of miſchief to the ſociety.—But citing thoſe who form theſe objections to the bar of reaſon, let us there aſcertain the merits of the caſe.

When the uninſtructed poor man contraſts the eaſe, the ſuperfluity, the gaudineſs of multitudes of his fellow-creatures, with the labour, the penury, the ſordidneſs, which conſtitute his own appointment in life, he cannot be inſenſible to the difference:—and Ignorance poſſeſſes no balm to mitigate the anguiſh of the wound, which nature muſt neceſſarily feel. Ignorance is unacquainted with the great plan of Providence. Ignorance has never penetrated to the country beyond the grave. Ignorance acknowledges no principle of duty in obedience and ſubmiſſion to that Almighty Being, *who is the rewarder of them that ſeek him.* To the unhappy man, his ſpecies ſeems to be banded againſt him; and the laws of his country to be framed for his oppreſſion.

oppreſſion. What he ſees, and feels, in ſhort, is in oppoſition to his intereſts; and his eye cannot reach to diſcover in future compenſation a motive to preſent acquieſcence. Will he not, then, be inclined to *reply againſt God*, and impiouſly to demand, *Why haſt thou made me thus?*—and will he not, alſo, be induced to regard every attempt to redreſs the injuriouſneſs of fortune, and every aggreſſion againſt a hoſtile ſociety, as allowable,—and a ſpecies of legitimate ſelf-defence? It is to be expected that he will: and the only ſecurities for his good conduct are a moral ſenſe, which is weak and depraved; and the penalties of the laws, which hardineſs may defy, or cunning may evade! But the ſubject of early diſcipline and inſtruction, with a juſt view of life, is diſpoſed to meet with patience ſuch of its tranſitory fortunes as are allotted to him. In the appointed ſcene it is not *the part*, he knows, but *the acting of the part*, which is of conſequence: and he waits without inquietude for the dropping of the

curtain, when the dreſſes of the actors will be laid aſide, and when of the pageant nothing will remain but the evil of ſin and the good of righteouſneſs. Till this event takes place, with the means of progreſſive information, he poſſeſſes a reſource againſt many of the diſcomforts of his ſituation. That hallowed page, which can adminiſter certainty to the doubtful, conſolation to the afflicted, and content to the repining,—opens to him all its rich treaſures of health. Is it, then, likely, that he will be fretful under the diſpenſations of a God, whoſe *thoughts towards him he knows to be thoughts of peace*: and break the order of ſociety, the inconveniencies of which are, as he is ſenſible, only temporary and partial.

But initiated into letters, he may be ambitious of diſengaging himſelf from the lower, and of riſing to the higher ſtation. He may:—and ſhould his perſeverance in the road, on which we place him, aided by the ſtrength of talents,

talents, enable him to ſucceed,—he will mount with his virtues and abilities only to be the inſtrument of larger good; and his original place in the community may be ſupplied by one of thoſe, whom ignorance and vice have tumbled from a loftier ſituation. To condemn men, as in ſome countries of the Eaſt, irreverſibly to hereditary lowneſs, and to withhold from character the ſame power of elevating, which it poſſeſſes of depreſſing, would at once be injurious and unwiſe. Were integrity and diligence, wiſdom and knowledge, equally diſtributed among the individuals of our race, the inequalities of rank would be unjuſt in the degree that they were unneceſſary; and a ſenſe of duty would urge every lover of mankind to attempt their abolition. Although in the preſent ſtate of things this can never be the caſe, and difference of condition, ariſing from difference of character, muſt neceſſarily, and for the general benefit, ſubſiſt; yet is it incumbent on us to ſoften, as much as poſſible,

the harſhneſs of this eſſential ſubordination, —to ſcatter, as widely as we can, with the ſeeds of virtue and knowledge, the means of juſt and rational equality; and to exclaim, in the words of the generous prophet,—*Would God all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his ſpirit on them all!*

But our plan of inſtructing on the ſeventh day has been condemned as a violation of its ſanctity. That we may no longer be affronted with the petulance of bigotry, let us affirm, that the ſeventh, or, as it is emphatically called by Chriſtians, the Lord's Day, is not the ſame with that peculiar inſtitution, the Sabbath of the Moſaic Law. From the circumſtance, of God's bleſſing and ſanctifying the ſeventh day, recorded in the ſecond chapter of Geneſis, it is probable, that ſuch a recurring period of devotion formed a part of the firſt ſyſtem of religion; and, though the fact be unnoticed in the

ſhort

ſhort hiſtory of thoſe early ages which we poſſeſs, was acknowledged under the patriarchal diſpenſation. The appointment, however, of the PROPER SABBATH cannot be conſidered as commencing before the departure of the Iſraelites from Egypt. In its full rigor it certainly conſtituted a part of the Jewiſh code alone; and is to be claſſed with thoſe numerous and binding ſtatutes which exerciſed and aſcertained the obedience of an intractable people. When our bleſſed Saviour came to complete and conclude the introductory ſyſtem, with the power which he aſſerted as the Lord of it, he firſt mitigated the Moſaic Sabbath, and then finally aboliſhed it by his death. In this aſſertion we are ſupported by the authority of an Apoſtle; St. Paul, in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians *, expreſsly ranking the ſabbath, the weekly ſabbath of the Jews, with thoſe *ordinances, the hand-writing of which had been blotted out, and nailed to his Croſs by Chriſt.* The JEWISH SABBATH was indeed aboliſhed:

* Col. ii. 14, 16, 17.

but

but another ſeventh day was conſecrated in its place; and, to commemorate that juſt cauſe of all our bleſſed hopes, the glorious reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, the diſtinction was transferred from the laſt to the firſt day of the week. Into this which may be called, though perhaps with ſome little impropriety, the Chriſtian *Sabbath*, was transfuſed the ſanctity unblended with the ſeverity of the Jewiſh. The Lord's was ſtill the ſeventh day hallowed by God at the creation; and ſtill a period of reſt: but its reſt was the pauſe of labour,—not of life; and its ſanctity was not ſo imperious as to overrule the activity of good. *Man*, it now became evident, *was not*, as our bleſſed Lord expreſſed it, *made for the ſabbath, but the ſabbath for man.* When like our Maſter, therefore, we refuſe to ſuſpend our beneficence in ſuperſtitious veneration of this ſacred day; when, devoting it after his example to works of mercy; and, with the Divine bleſſing on our endeavours, we employ it to *open the eyes of the blind, to re-*

leaſe

leaſe thoſe who are bound by Satan; and to enable the *withered hand* to be uſeful to man, and raiſed in gratitude to God,—may we not to the Sabbatarian bigots of the preſent times addreſs ourſelves in our Lord's words,—*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil:—to ſave life, or to kill?—had ye known what this meaneth, "I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice,"—ye would not have condemned the guiltleſs!*

HERE let us turn, my brethren, and for an inſtant contemplate the ſteps, which have led us to the firm ground, on which we now ſtand. It has been proved that the conſequences of the character of the individual are to the community great,—to himſelf momentouſly important. We have ſeen that this eventful character is, in its firſt ſtate, ſo ſoft as to be capable of impreſſion: that from neglect it uſually takes the ſtamp of evil,—from judicious attention that of good. It has been evinced, that to inſtruct

the

the child, and to faſhion his habits to piety and virtue, is a duty ſuggeſted by reaſon, and commanded by God. It has been ſhown, that the incapacity of the poorer members of the ſociety, to fulfil this important obligation, gives them a ſtrong claim for aſſiſtance on their more affluent brethren: and, laſtly, we have remarked, that this moſt ſalutary aid cannot be communicated by means more acceptable, and more generally beneficial, than by thoſe of the inſtitution for which we plead:—the inſtitution of the SUNDAY SCHOOL. The objections to this plan of large and various good have been conſidered, and proved to be the objections of illiberality, or of miſapprehenſion.

To you, my beloved, who are the patrons and ſupporters of an eſtabliſhment, into which is compreſſed ſo much of the ſolid materials of human happineſs, it is unneceſſary to urge the ſtrength of our common cauſe. Permitme only to point to it with exultation,

tion, while I congratulate you on poſſeſſing underſtandings, which need not my information to enlarge their ſcope; and benevolence, which aſks not my ſuggeſtions to inflame its zeal. Proceed! Still *ſtrengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees!* Still diffuſe *the ſpirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord!*—With this ſpecies of new creation, ſtill bleſs, as in the beginning, and ſanctify the ſeventh day! The noiſy plaudit of the world, which too frequently attends on bold and illuſtrious villainy, may not, perhaps, follow the modeſt and retreating efficiency of your goodneſs. But *be not weary in well doing*! The ſweet whiſper of accompliſhed duty, that STILL SMALL VOICE OF GOD within your breaſts, will ſpeak good tidings to your ſouls! The improvement, the happineſs, the gratitude of the objects of your generous care, will preſent you with immediate compenſation! Your beneficence will be gratified with the conſciouſneſs of its extenſion. When you determine on the ſide

of virtue and godlineſs the important queſtion,—*What manner of children ſhall theſe be?*—the ſtate to its extremities will feel the pervading benefit: and the laws of your country, with eyes dropping over the victims which their ſtern ſupremacy has exacted, will acknowledge You for their benefactors!—Yes the LAWS themſelves, gladly relinquiſhing the cruel inefficacy of PUNISHMENT, will thankfully receive from your hands the ſoft, yet ſolid, corroboration of PRINCIPLE! To You this is enough:—and to the objects of your fatherly regard it will be ſufficient to ſay,—*take faſt hold of inſtruction!—keep her, for ſhe is your life! Seek the peace of this eſtabliſhment, and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof ſhall ye have peace!*

BUT our taſk is yet incomplete.—Unite with me, my friends, to inforce this great cauſe of man with the eaſy and affluent of our fellow-creatures, who ſtill withhold from it their ſupport. *Speaking to them, as to wiſe men,*

men, and bidding them to judge what we ſay, let us tell them, that to diſſeminate morals and good order is a work, which every member of the community is equally intereſted to promote:—that great and general as the benefits of our inſtitution have been demonſtrated to be, the ſhare of the individual in the expences of its maintenance will be inconſiderable:—that, in ſhort, what we ſollicit from them is little;—but that the ſmall donation, like the humble water-drop which floated on the ocean, will condenſe and brighten into *a pearl of great price!* As CHRISTIANS,—let us aſk them, why, in oppoſition to his command, do they ſtill *forbid the little children to come* to their maſter Chriſt? As MEN, and lovers of themſelves, let us remind them, that, in the probable viciſſitudes of life, their children,—or their children's children may be in a condition to court the advantages of our lowly education, and for the means of re-aſſerting their father's middle rank in the ſociety, may be indebted

to the now deſpiſed and rejected ſeminary of a SUNDAY SCHOOL. Should theſe calm repreſentations to their reaſon unhappily be ineffectual, let us remove the tribunal, before which we ſtand, from their heads to their hearts, and plead with their feelings and their fears! Let us ſhow them the peſtilence of human guilt riſing from the putrid deſert of the mind, and proceeding to blemiſh and deſtroy the fair workmanſhip of God! Let us ſhow them the corruption and the neceſſities of idleneſs; the augmented force of appetite and paſſion; the widened circle of artificial want; the clamours of habitual exceſs for indulgence; the decay and ſubſequent diſſolution of principle!—And when we have ſhewn them this progreſs of guilt, let us point to its iſſue in the breach of the ſocial concord;—in the wrong of our neighbour; in the diſtreſs of the defrauded, and the ruin of the defrauder! Let us then exhibit to them the deeper tragedies of the paſſions! Let us ſhow them the faithleſs bar giving entrance

entrance to the midnight ruffian;—the ſanctity of the chamber violated; the innocent and ſacred hour of reſt invaded;—the miſerable man paſſing from the ſoft repoſe of nature to the iron ſlumber of the grave, or, perhaps, opening his eyes on the ſtern features of his murderer,—vainly ſupplicating for mercy, and groaning in the full agonies of death! Let us ſhow them the huſband or the wife; the parent or the child; the patron or the maſter hurried from the demands and the charities of life, and ſent to his laſt fearful account with all his imperfections on his head—even by thoſe very hands, perhaps, from which kindneſs and protection were moſt due! Let us then lead them from the horror of guilt to the awefulneſs of puniſhment:—to the ſtill and crowded court: to the forms of ſearching juſtice:—to the moſt ſolemn and affecting ſpectacle of man, by the expreſs appointment of his God, about to ſhed the blood of the man by whom *man's blood has been ſhed!* From this ſcene

let

let us bring them to the place of the criminal's confinement,—to the gloom of the grated cell, and the ſullen clank of the chain! Let us affright them with the ſolitude, or ſhock them with the ſociety and depravity of a priſon! Let us, then, place before them the concluding miſery of the execution; and ſhow them the wretch ſinking under the heavy, but late ſenſe of guilt, and ſhrinking from the pang of diſſolution, ſharpened by the doubt of reconciliation with Heaven: or, brutiſhly reckleſs of what is to come, by plunging deſperately into darkneſs, and carrying with him to judgment a mind exaſperated againſt God and man, exhibiting that genuine deformity of death, which cannot in truth be heightened by racks or wheels—or all the horrid engines of barbarity!—To theſe dreadful ſcenes let us preſent them with a contraſt in the happineſs and order, of individual and ſocial life, reſulting from regulated paſſions; occupied and inſtructed minds; early intimacy with the principles and the ſanctions

ſanctions of duty! Let us ſhew them a land *filled with the knowledge of the Lord*; and point to the ſeveral diſtinct concords, which together form the harmony of, the ſtate; to the populous and peaceful city; the orderly and induſtrious hamlet; the virtuous and chearful family! Let us ſhow them the riches of frugality and content; the health of labour and temperance; the death-bed of righteouſneſs; and the ANTICIPATED HEAVEN of a ſpirit departing in peace! With theſe views of miſery, and of happineſs before their eyes, let us tell them, 'By aſſociating with us in the great work 'of planting knowledge and piety in the 'youthful mind; you may prevent thoſe evils, 'and promote theſe bleſſings. Should you 'refuſe,—the wretch, whom you permit to '*go aſtray, and to fall in the greatneſs of his* '*folly*, will, indeed, *die in his iniquity*,—but 'his curſe will be alſo on your heads!—*his* '*blood will be required at your hands!* The 'youth, who, without your aſſiſtance, catches

'inſtruction,

'instruction, may *grow wise unto salvation*,
'*and die in his righteousness*;—but you can
'have *no part nor lot in the inheritance* of
'his blessing: *neither have ye saved your own*
'*souls!*—If these remonstrances and these warnings fail of their effect; and the small benefaction, which we, in the name of GOD and of MAN, sollicit, should still be withheld,—our duty is discharged;—and we can only pray, that such neglect, or such perverseness, be not laid to their account.—GRACIOUS GOD, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO! Amen.

FINIS.

10 FEB 60